

A Case of Melanism in *Natrix natrix* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Reptilia: Colubridae) in Bulgaria

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Abstract: A melanistic specimen of *Natrix natrix* in Central Stara Planina Mts. (Bulgaria) was found. The altitude of the place (2100 m. a.s.l.) is the highest, recorded for this species in Bulgaria. Description of specimen's external morphology, as well as a short taxonomic comment are given.

Key words: *Natrix natrix*, melanism, altitudinal distribution

In Bulgaria, only two melanistic specimens of grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) have been recorded until now (BURESCH, ZONKOW 1934). In this paper we present another founding of melanistic specimen of the grass snake.

In August 2002, Lj. Tomović collected one completely melanistic specimen, at the locality Zhaltiya giol, under the Golyam Kupen Peak, in Sredna Stara Planina Mountain, at about 2100 m altitude (UTM: LH23). This specimen has been transferred to terrarium and kept alive.

Description of the Specimen

Coloration: Trunk - dorsal side of the body is completely black with a few irregular, small dots; colour of the ventral side at the first 20 ventral scales is white, at the mid-body portion is typically black-and-white, and at the last third of the belly is completely black. Head - dorsal and lateral sides of the head are completely black without light spots around the mouth opening, and the ventral side of the head is white.

Morphometry and Pholidosis: L.corp. = 545mm, L.cd. = 95mm (the tip of the tail was injured); Sq. = 19; V. = 179; A. = 1/1; Scd. = 44(?)x2; Sl. = 7; Pro. = 1; Po. = 3; T. = 1+2; the eyes are above 3. and 4. supralabial plates; the seam between R. and N. is not shorter than this between R. and 1-st Sl.; Dorsal scales are clearly and strongly keeled and subcaudals are smooth.

This record shifts the altitudinal distribution border toward more than 2000 m a. s. l, and is the highest founding of grass snake in Bulgaria. It is over one hundred meters higher than the previously known for the country (BESHKOV, NANEV 2002).

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Нови данни за меланизъм при *Natrix natrix* L. (Reptilia, Colubridae) в България

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(Резюме)

Съобщава се за намирането на меланистичен екземпляр *Natrix natrix* (LINNAEUS, 1758) в Средна Стара планина на 2100 м.н.в. Мястото на намиране е най-високото, регистрирано за този вид в България. Дадено е пълно описание на външната морфология на екземпляра и кратък таксономичен коментар.